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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Food Distribution Division

HIGHLIGHTS OF NUTRITION EDUCATION CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY  
USDA NUTRITION COMMITTEE AND INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE  
ON  
NUTRITION EDUCATION AND SCHOOL LUNCH

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I. Description of Conference

- A. Theme: Increasing the effectiveness of nutrition education.
- B. Participants: 165 leaders in nutrition and education, representing a cross-section of the country.
- C. Program Resume: The first day was devoted to talks giving background information on what is known today about diets, principles of learning, and the application of social sciences to practical programs of nutrition education. It also included a symposium on nutrition education problems of four age groups, namely: Preschool (including Prenatal and infant); Elementary School Ages; Adolescence; and Adults. These talks pointed up inadequacies of various food nutrients in the general diet.

On the second day, the conference was divided into 12 groups for the purpose of discussing problem areas about which members were individually concerned.

The third day included:

- 1. A summary of highlights of the 12 discussion groups with a flannel board presentation of concepts, issues, and recommendations discussed and generally agreed upon.
- 2. A flannel board demonstration to illustrate stages in the Social Action Process for effectively translating ideas into action. (Area Home Economists have summary of this presentation.)
- 3. Summary of participants' evaluation of the entire conference.
- 4. Plans for extending benefits of the conference to area, State, and local levels.

The proceedings of the conference will be available at a later date.



II. Implications and applications of this conference to  
Food Distribution Programs

A. The concepts developed at the conference stressed:

1. The need for greater attention to the individual and to specific groups of people.

We must start where people are--with their interests, activities, food habits, economic and social background --and help them to identify their problems and feel the need for improving food habits, and taking corrective action by involving them in the problem.

Have we recognized differences in situations?--Could we be more realistic in our approach to States, schools, and individuals in terms of their problems, interests, and economic status? For example,

- a) Have we recognized differences in technical phases of State Programs when making State Analyses and administrative reviews in schools?
- b) Have we recognized specific problems of States in workshop planning and other program activities?

2. The need for changing attitudes and approaches.

We need to reevaluate our attitudes, motivations, techniques, and approaches to determine more effective ways of carrying out program objectives. This suggests:

- a) The need for a more definite clarification of the Secretary's Regulations on Type A requirements.
- b) The need for working more cooperatively in planning program improvements whether for the individual school, the State, the area conferences, or other meetings.
- c) The need for jointly working with the States on solutions to nutritional problems brought out by Administrative Analyses.
- d) The need for planning more cooperatively with State Agencies and industry in promoting use of monthly Plentiful Foods.
- e) The need for more cooperative planning with State and local personnel to make more effective use of USDA-donated foods.





3. The need for nutrition information by professional and other groups.

Since the School Lunch Program is designed to promote health and well-being of the Nation's children through serving a nutritionally adequate meal, there is need for a better understanding of the Type A lunch pattern by all Federal, State, and local personnel working with the Food Distribution Programs. Furthermore, professional workers in fields which are in any way related to nutrition, as well as community groups, need to understand the Type A pattern and become more aware of the excellent opportunity the School Lunch Program offers for improving the nutrition of school children.

B. Conference Issues:

Some of the issues raised at the conference included:

1. How can more valid information be obtained about background of the groups whose food habits we are trying to influence?

An interpretation of findings of current research and studies in terms of their application to Food Distribution Division programs would give some direction for meeting this issue. For example, such information released periodically from the Technical Services Section would be of great assistance to Area Office personnel. This might well be a cooperative exchange of information between Area offices and the D. C. Technical Services Section.

2. There is a need for a clearing house of valid information.

This could be met in part by the Technical Services release suggested above. It could be strengthened by the Area Home Economists taking a more active part in projects of State Nutrition Councils and other professional organizations insofar as it is practical.

3. How can School Lunch Education be made a positive learning experience?

While the School Lunch Program is a common denominator in improving food habits, we still have a selling job to do with many groups and communities. The fact that the conference accepted this as a challenge, shows that maximum use has not been made of its possibilities.



C. Conference Recommendations:

Two of the five final recommendations of the conference have special value to Food Distribution Division programs.

1. Regional and State meetings, using the techniques employed at this National Conference, should be planned to further the cause of improved food habits.
2. More research is needed on how to favorably influence food habits.

Since the School Lunch Program was named the common denominator in improving food habits and, therefore, came into such a prominent part of the conference, it was fortunate that there was representation of school lunch personnel at Federal, State, and local levels.

In conclusion, we want to express our appreciation for the opportunity of participating in this conference.





